



Executive Summary to Career Success for Personswith Disabilities



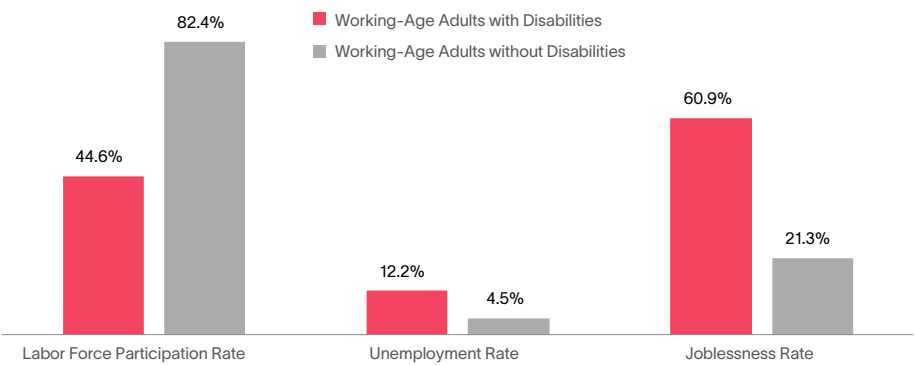
Key Findings

People with disabilities (PWDs) face many unique challenges and barriers to participating in the workforce. Ongoing efforts to improve labor market opportunities and outcomes for PWDs have contributed to steady growth in labor force participation and employment among working-age adults with disabilities. However, much progress remains to be made to close the gaps in employment outcomes that exist between workers with and without disabilities.

- In 2021, there were approximately 11 million working age adults in Florida, of whom an estimated 1.2 million had one or more disabilities. Actual prevalence rates likely exceed these estimates due to the frequent underreporting of unseen disabilities.
- PWDs make up 11% of the state’s working age population, but only represent 6% of its labor force.
- A 38-percentage point labor force participation rate gap exists between working-age adults with and without disabilities in Florida; People without disabilities are six times more likely to participate in the labor force.
- There is an 8-percentage point employment rate gap for working-age adults with disabilities in Florida; Those without disabilities are almost three times more likely to be employed than PWDs.



Figure 1: Labor Force Participation, Unemployment, and Joblessness Rates for Working-Age Adults with and without Disabilities in Florida, 2021

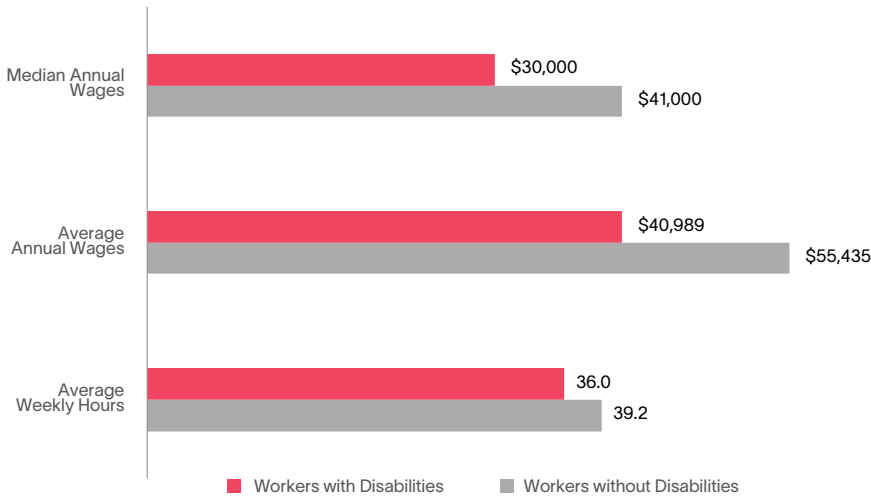


Source: Lightcast analysis of 2021 ACS 1-year estimates from IPUMS USA.

People with disabilities (PWDs), on average, earn much less than workers without disabilities employed in the same occupations and industries. These differences persist even when adjusting for workers total hours and weeks worked annually.

- The average median wage for PWDs in 2021 was \$30,000 compared to \$41,000 for workers without disabilities.
- There is an average annual earnings premium of \$14,500 for workers without disabilities when controlling for differences in hours and weeks worked annually.
- PWDs work an average of 3.2 hours less than their counterparts each week. This totals around 166 hours yearly, or approximately \$4,150 in lost wages for hourly employees earning the state’s average wage of \$25 per hour.
- Almost 30% of employed PWDs work part-time, compared to less than 20% of workers without disabilities. It is unclear what factors are driving these trends.

Figure 2: Median and Average Annual Wages and Average Weekly Hours for Employed Working-Age Adults with and without Disabilities in Florida, 2021

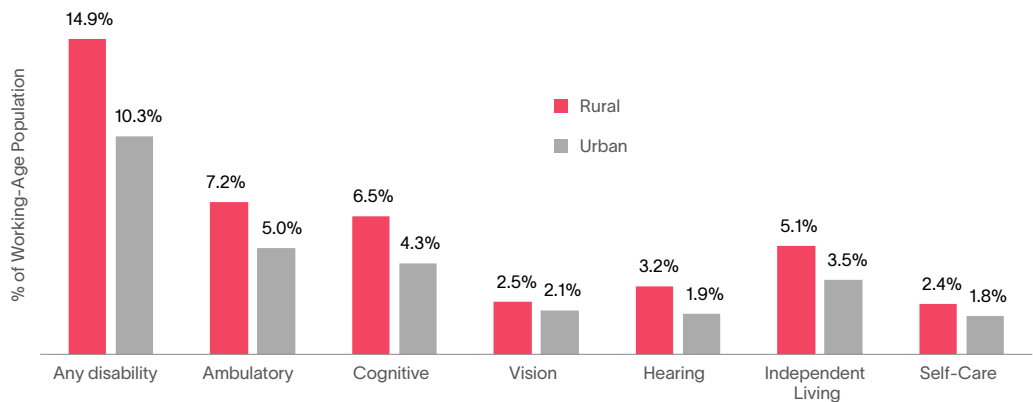


Source: Lightcast analysis of 2021 ACS 1-year estimates from IPUMS USA.

Working-age adults with disabilities in Florida's urban areas outnumber those living in rural regions. Proportionally, PWDs are more highly concentrated in the state's rural areas. The job market is tough for workers with disabilities in both rural and urban contexts.

- Rural working-age Floridians are 1.5 times more likely than their urban counterparts to have a disability. The prevalence of ambulatory and cognitive difficulties in rural working-age adults exceeds that of their urban peers by 2.2 percentage points.
- The labor force participation rate is 5-percentage points higher in urban settings, which may be due to increased resources and more access to job opportunities in general. However, urban workers with disabilities are only slightly more likely than rural workers with disabilities to be employed.
- Rural workers with disabilities are more than three times as likely as those without disabilities to be unemployed. Urban workers with disabilities are just under three times as likely to be unemployed.

Figure 4: Disability Prevalence Among Working-Age Floridians by Disability Type and Rural/Urban Status, 2021

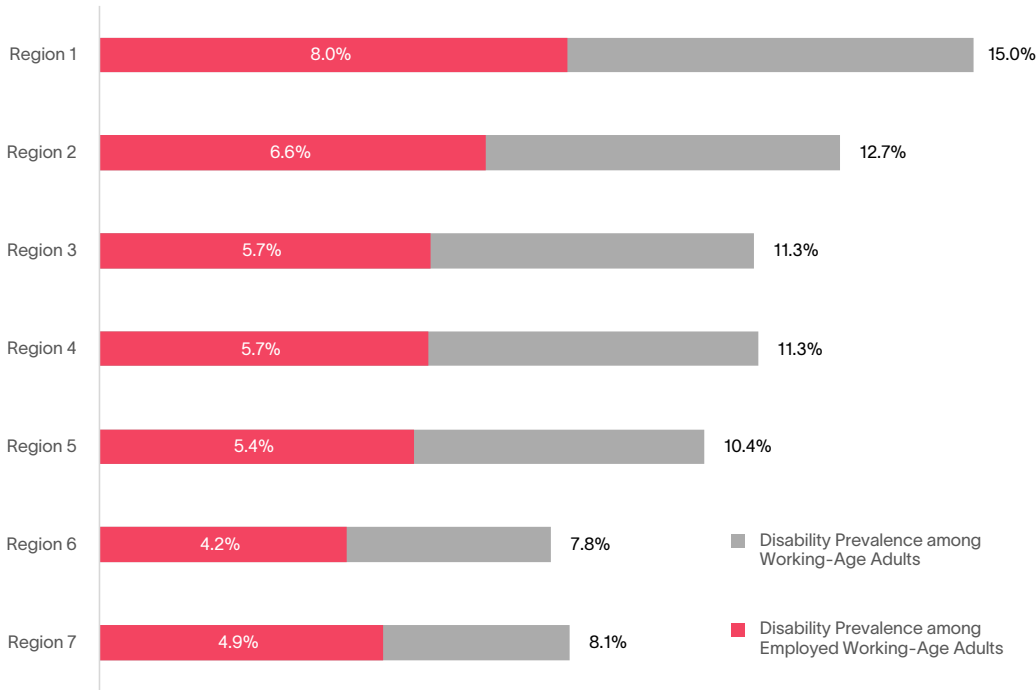


Source: Lightcast analysis of 2021 ACS 1-year microdata from IPUMS USA

The rural-urban divide is reflected in the employment outcomes for PWDs across Florida’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation at the Florida Department of Education (FDOE/VR) Areas. Compared to Florida’s general population, working-age adults with disabilities are most highly concentrated in FLDOE/VR Areas 1 and 2, and most underrepresented among the employed population.

- FLDOE/VR Areas 1 and 2 are home to 22% of Florida’s working-age population, but 28% of its working-age population with disabilities. This creates an additional layer of difficulty for connecting PWDs to not only employment opportunities, but also to employer networks, disability resources, and education and training.
- The labor force participation rate gap for PWDs is greatest in FLDOE/VR Area 4 at 41-percentage points. In Area 7, 53% of working-age adults with disabilities are participating in the labor force.
- FLDOE/VR Regions 1 and 2 have the greatest disparities between the representation of PWDs in the employed and the general populations.

Figure 7: Comparison of Disability Prevalence Among the Overall and Employed Working Age Adult Populations by FLDOE/VR Region, 2021



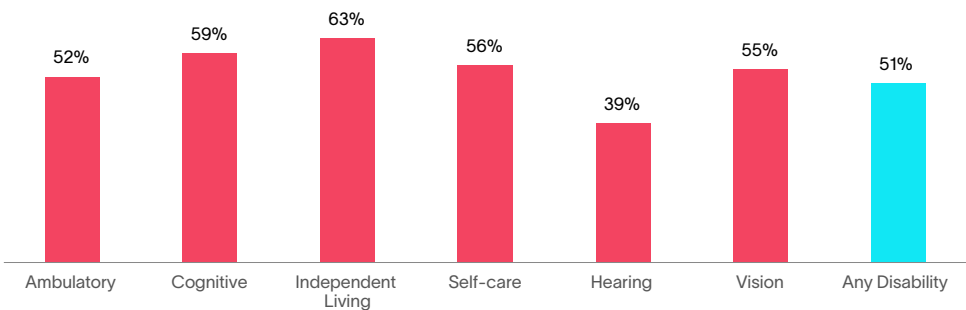
Source: Lightcast analysis of 2021 ACS 1-year estimates from IPUMS USA

The employment experiences and outcomes of PWDs are not one-dimensional. Occupation accessibility varies by disability type, and the occupational distribution of workers with disabilities often reflects the nature of challenges associated with the different disability categorizations. In general, workers with sensory (hearing and vision) and ambulatory disabilities have more success in the labor market.

- Among working-age adults with disabilities, those with sensory disabilities (hearing and vision) have the highest employment rate at 92.1%
- More than half of all workers with disabilities are employed in occupations with average earnings below 80% of the Florida AMI. Yet only 39% of workers with hearing disabilities earn less than 80% of the AMI, compared to 63% of workers with independent living disabilities and 59% of workers with cognitive disabilities.
- Workers with sensory and ambulatory disabilities are most likely to be employed in Management occupations. Those who have cognitive and independent living disabilities are highly concentrated in Food Preparation and Serving occupations. Such differences likely contribute to earning disparities observed across different disability types.

THE TOP 10 OCCUPATIONS BY EMPLOYMENT OF PWDS IN FLORIDA FOR 2021 ALL HAD ANNUAL AVERAGE WAGES BELOW 80% OF THE AMI, AND/OR ARE PROJECTED TO SHED JOBS OVER THE NEXT DECADE.

Figure 10: Distribution of Workers with Disabilities Earning Less than 80% Florida AMI by Disability Type, 2021



Source: Lightcast analysis of 2021 ACS 1-year estimates from IPUMS USA

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

FLDOE/VR, with the support of The Able Trust, is already helping to pave the path to a more inclusive and disability-friendly labor market. The following details opportunities, strategies, and recommendations for situating PWDs as part of Florida's workforce solution. Continued investments in streamlining and improving the state's workforce development and education resources is instrumental to connecting workers with disabilities to employment, education, and training opportunities.

- The Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) Act is a prime example of how partners throughout Florida's workforce service delivery system can and are stepping up to connect talent supply to demand within the state. As similar efforts move forward, FLDOE/VR, with the support of The Able Trust, can facilitate the development of a workforce services delivery system that supports the needs of all workers, including the often-overlooked population with disabilities.
- Disabilities are not one size-fits-all, nor are the needs of workers who have them. Encouraging self-advocacy among PWDs and advocating on their behalf can help to ensure that the unique needs of this population are taken into consideration as the state revamps its workforce system.

An aging workforce alongside steep declines in labor force participation during the COVID-19 pandemic have created new areas of opportunity for PWDs to step-in and demonstrate their value to employers. Occupations and industries with faster than average projected growth rates provide excellent opportunities to increase the representation of PWDs in higher-wage high-growth occupations.

- Growing industries, like Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, offer expanded employment opportunities for all Floridians. FLDOE/VR is already taking advantage of these opportunities through initiatives like The ArtCIE Project, a pilot program that will help subminimum wage workers with disabilities build skills needed in competitive industries like the Arts. Continued investment in and implementation of such programs will support increased employability of PWDs.



- Industries in which Floridians with disabilities lag their counterparts nationally in representation include Healthcare and Social Assistance, and Manufacturing. Both sectors offer opportunities for PWDs, and The Able Trust can support FLDOE /VR in helping Floridan's with disabilities achieve representation on par with national averages through employer engagement and targeted workforce development services.

Workers with disabilities are, across the board, more likely than workers without disabilities to be employed in low-wage, low-growth occupations. Career pathing can help workforce development service providers support workers in making successful transitions to occupations with greater upward mobility. The Transition and Destination Occupations in the Tables below offer examples of how services can be structured to have the most impact.

Transition Occupations	Total Employed PWDs	Annual Average Wages for PWDs	Disparity Ratio
Janitors and Building Cleaners	7,521	\$16,481	1.8
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	4,661	\$11,515	1.1
Stockers And Order Fillers	4,493	\$18,734	1.9
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	4,331	\$19,444	1.9
Construction Laborers	4,048	\$16,591	1.1
Cooks	3,519	\$18,387	1.1
Security Guards and Gambling Surveillance Officers	3,330	\$27,570	1.8
Landscaping And Groundskeeping Workers	3,130	\$17,455	1.2
Nursing Assistants	2,842	\$20,360	1.1
Carpenters	2,841	\$28,104	1.2

- Focusing upskilling efforts on people currently employed in transition occupations – those with lower-growth and lower-wages, but high representation of PWDs - will naturally oversample PWDs and provide them with training needed to advance from their current jobs.

Destination Occupations	Total Employed PWDs	Annual Average Wages for PWDs	Disparity Ratio
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	2,655	\$31,045	1.1
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	1,916	\$50,430	1.3
Construction Managers	1,899	\$54,641	1.1
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	1,867	\$37,054	1.2
Management Analysts	1,635	\$80,906	1.1
Property, Real Estate, and Community Association Managers	1,465	\$42,920	1.0
Computer Occupations, All Other	1,441	\$45,483	1.1
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	1,338	\$40,644	1.4
Computer Support Specialists	1,252	\$51,072	1.1
Billing and Posting Clerks	1,238	\$30,611	1.2



- Destination occupations are accessible (indicated by proportional or overrepresentation of PWDs), growing, and pay above average wages. Focusing job placement and employer engagement efforts on destination occupations will provide PWDs links to occupations where evidence suggests they are poised for success.

While employers are making conscientious efforts to create more inclusive workplaces, they often lack expertise needed to do so, making them hesitant to embrace the perceived “challenges” of recruiting and onboarding workers with disabilities. Connecting employers to resources for supporting workers with disabilities and disseminating best practices can help to illuminate the benefits of this underutilized source of talent.

- Employers with experience employing and supporting PWDs can be the best advocates for dispelling myths and misunderstandings within the broader community of employers. In cultivating a stronger, more inclusive workforce.
- Through the identification and dissemination of research and best practices for employing and supporting workers with disabilities, FLDOE/VR, with support from The Able Trust, can take a leading role in dispelling common misperceptions. Educating employers on accommodations and arrangements promotes positive outcomes for both workers and employers.

Vocational Regions Map

